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United States Department of Agriculture,

BUREAU OF PLANT INDUSTRY,

Drug and Poisonous Plant and General Physiological Investigations,
WASHINGTON, D. C.

AMERICAN GINSENG,

Ginseng is a low herbaceous plant, native in the rich moist soil of hardwood forests from Maine to Minnesota and southward to the mountains of northern Georgia and Arkansas. It is cultivated commercially



FIG. 1.—Branch, root, and fruit of American ginseng.

in New York, Pennsylvania, Michigan, Wisconsin, and southward to Missouri, Tennessee, and North Carolina. (Fig. 1.)

The features of ginseng culture are based on the natural conditions under which the plant grows. A deep mellow soil rich in humus and free from the roots of other plants is required. This condition is main-

tained by free mulching of the plants in the fall with either well-rotted leaves or straw. Manure may be applied cautiously. Since ginseng is a forest plant, shade is required, which may be supplied by the erection of slat sheds over the beds (fig. 2).

The seed, which is supposed to lose its vitality if allowed to become thoroughly dry, is sown in the spring or autumn in drills 6 inches apart and about 2 inches apart in the row. The plants remain in the seed bed for two years and are then transplanted, being set about 8 inches apart each way. It requires from five to seven years to obtain marketable roots from seed. If roots are planted a marketable product will be obtained sooner, according to the age and vigor of the stock used.

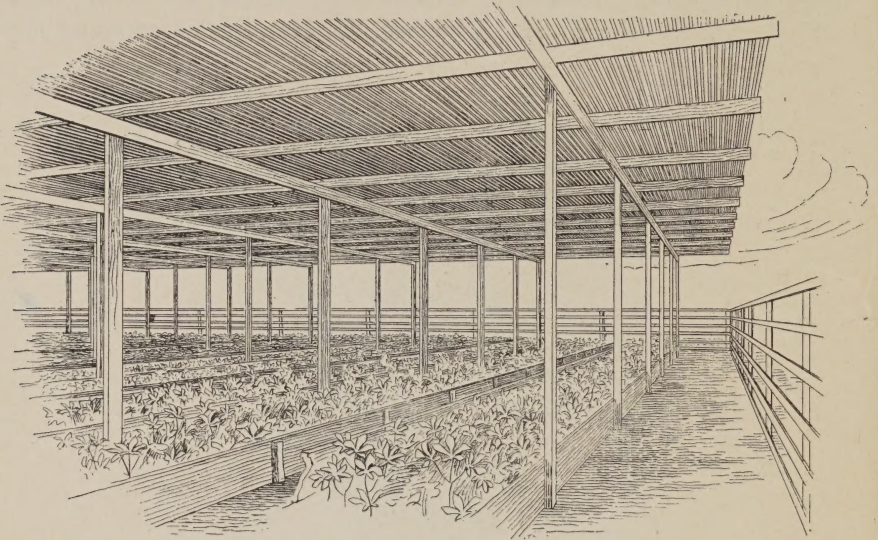


FIG. 2.—Ginseng growing under a lath shed.

The roots are set about 8 by 8 inches apart. When the roots have reached marketable size they are dug, washed, sorted, and dried.

A small quantity of ginseng is consumed by the Chinese residents of this country, but the principal market is found in China. The quantities and values of our ginseng exportations for the five years ended June 30, 1908, are given in the following table compiled from official sources:

Year.	Quantity.	Value.
	<i>Pounds.</i>	
1904	132,882	\$851,820
1905	146,576	1,069,849
1906	160,949	1,175,844
1907	117,696	813,023
1908	154,180	1,111,994

The price of ginseng varies with the market conditions, but at the present time the root is worth from \$5.75 to \$6.50 a pound, according

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to quality. Roots of southern origin bring less than those from northern localities. Cultivated roots have usually been regarded as somewhat inferior to the wild product, but quotations do not show marked discrimination.

The Department of Agriculture has no seeds or roots of ginseng for distribution. These are advertised in many newspapers and magazines, but the Department can not undertake to recommend or guarantee the reliability of any particular firm. The seeds are advertised at from 75 cents to \$15 per thousand, and the roots, according to age and source, at from 25 cents to \$10 per hundred. A pound contains about 8,000 seeds.

Since the successful cultivation of ginseng calls for special conditions and unusual care in treating the seed and plants, it is clear that those who contemplate going into ginseng cultivation should look at their prospects with conservatism.

RODNEY H. TRUE, 1866-1940
Physiologist in Charge.

Approved :

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Chief of Bureau.

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